

THE Y.W.C.A. IN
LATIN AMERICA

by

RUTH F. WOODSMALL

General Secretary, World's Y. W. C. A.



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PREFACE

FIVE months for a tour of Latin America seems at first thought a fairly adequate, even liberal allowance of time, considering the number of travellers who make the loop of South America in half that time. But few such travellers include Mexico and all the ten Republics of South America.

The purpose of this visit was twofold:

1. To strengthen the relationship between the World's Y.W.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. centres in Latin America.
2. To study the present situation of the Y.W.C.A. in Latin America with reference to the possibilities of further development.

This combination of a visit of interpretation with an objective survey presented a distinctly difficult task, especially in view of my lack of previous direct contact with this area and my unfamiliarity with the Spanish language. It was, however, a most illuminating experience.

My entire journey was made by air except for several small sections, which obviously reduced the travel time to a minimum and also had the great value of giving a cumulative impression of Latin America as a whole, though it left no interlude between countries for mental digestion. To be able to visit Mexico and all the countries of Latin America on one continuous journey was a remarkable opportunity and particularly so in this war period. Mexico, the first country on my schedule, was

at war within a month, and Brazil a bare fortnight after my visit.

The five months were a period of continual discovery of the meaning of all that I had heard and read about Latin America, "that other America" of John Mackay's book.*

Advance interviews with a number of persons conversant with Latin American affairs were very helpful in opening up certain lines of thought for special study; most of them resulted also in letters of introduction. Certain connections can always be established easily, but some doors can be opened only by a personal introduction. This is particularly true just now in South America, which has suffered recently from an overexposure to travellers, especially journalists, "good neighbours" from the United States, and others.

Perhaps a word should be said here about the use of terms in connection with this account of my journey. "Latin America" is used to cover all the countries visited, including Mexico. This seems to be the current term and takes in Brazil, of Portuguese culture, as well as the Spanish-speaking countries. "South America" is used as a natural term for the geographical area in contrast to North America.

* *That Other America*: John A. Mackay. Missionary Education Movement, N. Y. 1935.

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The Latin American Background

THE fundamental differences between Latin America and the North America that I knew constantly impressed me.

First is the difference in cultural origin—North America settled by seekers for religious liberty from Northern Europe; South America settled by conquest accompanied by the planting of the Cross. Second is the difference in religious background, North America being predominantly Protestant, founded on the principle of religious freedom and hence hospitable to other forms of the Christian faith and to other faiths; South America dominantly Roman Catholic. A third difference is that of language. North America is English-speaking, with Anglo-Saxon tradition and culture as the basic foundation of the national life, and enriched by many other national and cultural contributions. South America, whether Spanish-speaking or, as Brazil, using the Portuguese language, is imbued with the culture of Continental Europe, proud of that European culture, and seeking to reproduce it in the New World.

To accept the fact of these fundamental differences between the two Americas is essential to an understanding of the tempo and the way of life of "that other America," and is the only basis for intelligent and constructive international cooperation. But there is a further difference between the countries themselves, greater than is perhaps generally realized until one views them for himself. From Mexico to Argentina there is a more striking range of unlikeness than one finds anywhere in Europe or in Asia. These divergencies, however, fall into certain natural groupings.

A bird's-eye view of Latin America leaves a clear

impression of the following natural geographical groups: (1) Mexico and Central America; (2) the Caribbean Coast—Venezuela and Colombia; (3) the West Coast—Colombia (here also), Ecuador, Peru and Chile, and Bolivia almost in the middle, with some connection also with the east; (4) the East Coast—Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay; and (5) Brazil, a great area distinct from the rest of the continent.

Other groupings might be in terms of common problems, the problem of race for example: countries practically pure white, largely European, as Chile, Argentina and Uruguay; countries of large Indian population, as Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay; countries with a high percentage of mixed races, as Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia. Brazil stands alone in its Portuguese culture with approximately fifty per cent white population and the rest a mixed population of Indian, Negro and white. Economic and political problems, small countries and large, social advance, and change in the status of women would furnish bases for further groupings. Such problems cannot be dealt with here, but an awareness of them, and of the differences, makes it possible to isolate certain basic common factors on which some generalization is possible.

Religious Tensions in Latin America

I labor under no illusions as to the inevitable superficiality of my impressions of the complex religious situation in Latin America. Five years, not five months, would furnish a bare beginning for some conception of this problem. But even less than five months would make clear certain facts.

The Roman Catholic Church is a power in the life of every country, even in those which have swung

farthest away from its control. It represents social prestige and social conservatism; those who fear change regard it as the bulwark of the old order, and affiliation with it can be a definite social, economic and political asset to the individual. For a large number, perhaps an increasing one, membership is a nominal affiliation, an almost automatic process identified with the major events of life—baptism, marriage, death; for many it is prudential, a solid background for social and business activities. Thus the control of the Roman Catholic Church over the life of the people cannot be measured, probably, either by statistics of church membership or by crowded cathedrals on Sunday, but both are evidence that an overwhelming majority in Latin America are adherents of that part of the Christian Church.

It is difficult to say how large is the number of practising Roman Catholics (those who go regularly to confession), but women undoubtedly constitute an important and by far the larger element. A great many of the intellectuals, under the strong influence of French rationalistic philosophy, regard religion as synonymous with supernaturalism and contrary to science. Hence religion and the Roman Catholic Church—the two ideas are to many practically identical in Latin America—are considered suitable for the masses and for women, but not for those who feel that they have graduated, so to speak, from the need for religion. It is an attitude of indifference and superiority rather than antagonism, religion having become an intellectual or cultural concept to be accepted or not as a tenable thesis, not at all a personal conviction that determines the way of life.

There is an entirely different type of educated leader who has turned from the Church for a different reason. Progressive social thinkers who have found in the Church no help for the solution of social evils have dismissed the

Church from their thinking. They feel that the Church has had complete power for four hundred years, yet has done nothing for social reform; social welfare and charity, yes, but no social reform. The thinking of others was expressed by an outstanding woman leader when she said: "My social impulse has nothing to do with religion; it is purely humanitarian."

Among the middle class in some countries, especially where there is an emerging class consciousness among the workers, there is a general anti-religious trend. This trend does not affect, as yet, I believe, the large *empleades* section of the middle class, the employees in shops and offices and the poorly paid government workers, since here, as in other countries, this class seems as a rule more individualistic and less interested in collective action. As for the great majority of students, men and women alike, religion scarcely enters into their thinking. There is no antagonism to it, since this would presuppose an active interest that does not exist, although in some places, because of the low status of the priesthood, the presence of foreign priests and the general exploitation of the common people, there is an active anti-ecclesiasticism, allied with nationalism and the aggressive promotion of social reform.

Leaders in touch with students comment on the lack of spiritual unrest. "There is no spiritual dynamic for action, no spirit of inquiry into spiritual problems, and no real spiritual disquietude. The tacit acceptance of the complete divorce of religion from personal ethics or morals or social reform is the most serious feature of the religious situation." This is the analysis made by a Protestant leader. It was confirmed to me by an ardent Roman Catholic leader, a young European representative of the Pax Romana. He stressed the fact of the difference in origin and development between the Roman

Catholic Church in South America and in North America and Europe. The Church in South America was in its beginning directly dependent upon the Spanish Sovereign and only indirectly under the control of the Pope. South America has continued to guard this distinctiveness, and it might, as someone has suggested, be more accurate to speak of the South American Catholic Church than of the Roman Catholic.

There are ample evidences that the Roman Catholic Church is endeavouring to strengthen its position, first from within, through the Catholic Action organization, *Acción Católica*. Every country has its national organization, every city its central direction, and every parish its group, subdivided into special groups for men, women and youth. Reforms in the Church itself are under way in certain areas, and new leadership is being brought in, from the United States and other countries. There is genuine concern over the secularization of social welfare and social work as well as education. The liberal support given by the Roman Catholic Church to its charities and welfare agencies, the subsidies to youth organizations (for example, a Jesuit Boy Scout organization in Caracas), the establishment and control of Roman Catholic Schools of Social Work in practically all countries in South America, and the influence exerted on government social welfare schemes are significant evidences of the Church's growing concern to exercise influence on the public through social welfare.

The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward non-Catholic Christian efforts—the Protestant and Evangelical Churches and the œcumenical Christian movements such as the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A.—is always in the background and occasionally sharply in the foreground of one's thought. The Roman Catholic Church officially is opposed to the penetration of other religious influence

and considers all non-Roman Catholic institutions bearing the name Christian as Protestant. The œcumenical position is not admitted. Any developments in Roman Catholic relationships are of interest to the Y.W.C.A. because of this.

Trends and Influences Changing the Life of Women

Changes in the life of women in every country are of fundamental interest to the Y.W.C.A. because the Y.W.C.A. is always a factor producing change and is itself affected by the degree of change. In Latin America the prevailing pattern of life for women has been determined by the dominant Church. Under the impact of modern influences this pattern has been and is being definitely changed. Obviously, over such a large area as Latin America, it is impossible to generalize upon so variable a subject, for there is a tremendous difference between Venezuela, where not until August 1942 did the first woman receive a degree in law, and Chile, where two women were graduated in medicine over forty years ago.

Latin America offers an interesting parallel to the Moslem world, although these two worlds seem so far removed. In both there is an integral relationship between religion and social custom, and this socio-religious unity has largely determined the pattern of the life of women. Moreover, these two areas of the world, today so unrelated, are historically connected because of Moorish influence in Spain. In visiting certain cities, particularly Bogotá and Lima, the latticed windows of some of the old Colonial houses were a vivid reminder of this Moorish influence.

As to the position of women today in South America,

I have observed that the countries can be divided into two main groups. The countries on the West Coast, except Chile, seem to be in one group, and the countries on the East Coast in the other, with of course considerable variation within each group. The Y.W.C.A. is organized in Chile and in the countries of the second group, plus Bolivia, which lies between the two divisions.

In talking with leaders in the different countries about the present position of women, I was struck by the fact that the criteria of advance are the same in all countries, and that, as in other parts of the world, the general movement is in the same direction, regardless of the rate of change. The criterion always given first is the basic advance in education for girls. The number of women in professions grows steadily, and women employed in business, even in socially conservative countries, show marked increase. Schools of Social Work have created a new profession for women and definitely affected their welfare, especially of the underprivileged.

There is political equality through the suffrage in a number of countries, gained through the active efforts of women or as part of a general reform movement. In a few countries women take an active part in political life, notably in Chile, Uruguay and Brazil. Growth in political consciousness has been most significant among women of the workers' groups, who have shown unusual ability and capacity for political leadership. Young industrial women in Buenos Aires have been effectively promoting new social legislation and the virtual leader of the Social Democratic party in the Argentine is a woman.

In recent years there has been a decided increase in women's organizations. Most of them are centered on some line of social welfare—hospital service, child care, care of the aged—and many are liberally subsidized

by the Roman Catholic Church or are directly under its control. They represent an urge to social service for the underprivileged but are not concerned with the eradication of social evils. A number of organizations having more or less the character of a woman's movement are found in every country. Many of these represent the effort of a single leader, and with a change in leaders may cease to exist. This fluidity of women's organizations and their proprietary leadership seem to be characteristic of Latin America, doubtless the natural expression of the highly individualistic Latin temperament. The general impression gathered from conversations with a number of women leaders in South America is that organizational activity does not attract the great majority of women. Concrete objectives may attract but not organization as such.

The present stirring of patriotic effort as a result of the war has succeeded in bringing together in an unusual way women of different levels of life and religious background. The Argentine movement, *Junta de la Victoria*, is especially significant. It has quickly reached women all over Argentina, and promotes not merely war service, as in most countries, but also the cause of democracy as an essential element in Civilian Defense. *Memsch* is a widespread association in Chile for the social and economic advance of women, in which educated professional women cooperate with the leaders among the workers on a fundamental basis of social reform.

Most international organizations of women are represented in Latin America: the Suffrage Alliance, the International Council of Women, the International Federation of University Women, the W.C.T.U., the International League for Peace and Freedom, and the World's Y.W.C.A.

Emergence of the Middle Class

In Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, and in a city like São Paulo in Brazil, a middle class is rapidly emerging and becoming an element of considerable importance. The absence of such a middle class has for centuries continued the feudal system which was transferred intact to Latin America in the Middle Ages, and this new trend as it spreads will therefore mark the end of an era.

The present world crisis may accelerate this advance. The War of 1914-1918 brought a general social awakening to the Near East and Far East and increased the power of the working classes in Europe and North America. Thoughtful observers in Latin America are of the belief that one main after-effect of the present war will be a growth in the influence of the middle class and of the workers in South America. This increase in the middle class means a definite opportunity for the Y.W.C.A., not only in its institutional features as a service organization but also as a thought-movement among women and as a social force for the education of public opinion.

Growth of Intra-Latin American Relations

The growth of intra-Latin American relations—cultural, religious, social, economic, political—is not the immediate result of the war but undoubtedly has been stimulated by it. It is also the natural result of the remarkable increase in facilities for communications and transportation. Not so long ago, a letter from Lima to Bogotá went by slow coastal steamer. Today by Pan American Airways it is delivered in a day. Countries hitherto isolated are being linked with their neighbours, and not only the value of this closer relationship is being recognized as basic to sound national development but

its necessity. Undoubtedly, also, it will form a more solid foundation for closer relationship between North and South America.

Reorientation of Culture in South America

Another present-day trend in Latin America, affecting a different area of life, is the reorientation of culture away from Europe and toward North America. Paris has always been the Mecca, Europe the synonym of culture, culture not as a means to an end but an end in itself. Evidence of this shift in cultural emphasis is slight in some countries, marked in others. The desire to learn English is greatly accelerated, and with Europe temporarily cut off, the way is open for a new *rapprochement* with North America.

The United States has taken advantage of this opportunity in many ways. A chain of effective cultural institutes has been established throughout South America, where the English language is taught and the culture of North America interpreted; direct personal contacts between North and South America have been steadily multiplied; help in welfare services has been extended to a number of countries—all as part of a general plan of developing closer relationships of a cultural, economic and political character. It must not be forgotten that South America has had also long-established cultural contacts with England, through which Anglo-Saxon influences have made their impression. In a number of countries, notably Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, a definite effort is now being made to strengthen these cultural ties with Great Britain.

The reorientation of South America toward North America and the strengthening of ties with Great Britain during the exigencies and opportunities of a war period should not be interpreted as a permanent migration of

cultural prestige. European life and thought are too deeply imbedded in the life of Latin America not to have cultural relations between Continental Europe and South America reestablished when there is again an opportunity. It should not be, however, an either-or. South America should be able to retain her ties with the old world and be enriched by the new world connections. Whatever may be the post-war pattern of international relations, the trend toward more contact with the United States will surely have permanent value for both North and South America. For the World's Y.W.C.A. the cultural reorientation of Latin America as a whole has special interest, as it may have a bearing on the place of the Y.W.C.A.s of South America in a world setting.

The Six Countries

THE Young Women's Christian Association is established in eight centres in six Latin American countries: Mexico, two centres; Chile, two, the only centres on the West Coast; Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil, the three countries on the East Coast, one each; and Bolivia, in the east centre, one. In addition to these regularly organized Associations there is a Girl Reserve Club in the Lima High School, Lima, Peru. The field is therefore very thinly occupied, but the fact that the Y.W.C.A. is in the capital city of six countries means that it is strategically placed for further development.

Four Associations—México, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay—are in what is known as pioneer relationship to the World's Y.W.C.A.; two are affiliated in corresponding membership—Argentina and Chile. Chile is the only country which has organized a national movement. Argentina, as a corresponding member, has technically the status of a national movement but has not yet completed a national organization. Peru is in the "survey stage."

MEXICO

A VISIT TO MEXICO is an excellent introduction to a journey through Latin America. Geographically it is a part of North America and linked closely to it in many ways; at the same time it shares with Latin America a common language, a common culture, and a common religious faith. My visit was in Easter Week, which is a wonderful time to be in a country of Roman Catholic background.

On Holy Thursday evening a great throng of people

made the rounds of the churches, an endless procession which scarcely stopped before the brilliantly lighted altars, since there is virtue in visiting at least seven churches that one evening. The next day I journeyed to Taxco, a famous cathedral town of the Spanish Colonial days, for the Easter ceremonies. Here the burning of the paper effigies of Judas hanging at the front of every house and shop, the procession of crudely costumed Roman soldiers, the throng of worshippers in the great cathedral, bringing their offerings of grain and flowers—all this made one realize the dramatic appeal of Easter to the masses. In these masses were Indians who had come from many miles across the mountains, and their presence explained the unfamiliar element in the ceremonies, as the Roman Catholic Church has Indianized the ritual. Thus the Indian in his conversion to Christianity carries his past with him and feels at home.

Stopping in Cuernavaca on my return, I attended a service Easter morning in the Mission Church, which in its barren simplicity was in striking contrast to the great cathedral celebrations. It was a service in which the Sunday School and congregation shared. Back in Mexico City again, I attended a cinema which had attracted great crowds, "Jesus of Nazareth," a reproduction of the Passion Play remarkably well done.

The Y.W.C.A. in Mexico City, at 110 Artículo 123, is a centre of life. It is conveniently located and has a fine, well-equipped building, which is its own property.

The distinctive feature of the Y.W.C.A. programme in Mexico City is the Physical Education Department. Few Associations have such an excellent gymnasium and swimming pool and such a well-organized health education programme. Over 2,500 girls each year have the medical examination given by the three Mexican women

doctors who are at the service of the Y.W.C.A., yet these are only a small percentage of the total number that benefit from the Department's programme of sports, gymnastics, posture classes, dancing, life saving, and so on. A swimming class for crippled children is taught by a young European physical director, the only person in Mexico trained for work under water (a training received through the Y.W.C.A.).

Undoubtedly the general public in Mexico City identifies the Y.W.C.A. with the gymnasium and swimming pool; a more limited number may think of it as a hostel. There is always a waiting list for the hostel, and its cafeteria on the ground floor serves a limited number from outside as well as the hostel residents. An employment bureau gives a great deal of time to personal counselling. The room registry aids over a thousand people a year.

The mother-child welfare centres, *Casa de Madre*, of the Department of Child Welfare of the government, originated in the Y.W.C.A. clinic for the pre-school age child, a pioneering venture. Its experimental camp for undernourished children has furnished the pattern for a number of government camps. The swimming class for crippled children, mentioned above, will undoubtedly lead to some governmental provision. The Y.W.C.A. has been also a pioneer in recreation camps.

The Association in Mexico City has some unusual assets. Its splendid building and endowment, its financial security and the long-term service of its foreign staff have put it in a privileged position, giving it stability and enabling a steady movement forward.

Because of this the Y.W.C.A. is recognized as a valuable institution. It is in close contact with various organizations and women's groups and has unusual opportunity to be a force for educating public opinion

and directing social thinking. Its one definite weakness is its lack of contact with students. This is a recognized weakness, however, and so can be improved.

The Board is largely Mexican, both women in professions and home women, and largely Roman Catholic. Many of them give a great deal of time to the Association. The majority of the members are Roman Catholics, the "atmosphere" in Mexico being freer in this respect than in most of the centres in South America. But the Y.W.C.A. labours with the same difficulty as elsewhere, of making clear its position as an œcumenical movement, since it is generally considered to be a Protestant organization. Nevertheless, it works along steadily in the midst of all the counter forces of Mexico City life, building a stable centre of constructive influence in the life of many women and girls.

By taking an early morning plane from Mexico City and a night train back that evening, I managed to have a full day in Guadalajara—very full but most worthwhile. The atmosphere here, one feels immediately, is different, more restricted and more shut in. There are various government rulings and the attitude of the Church is somewhat less friendly to anything not connected with that Church.

In such an atmosphere the Y.W.C.A. must justify its existence, and does; it is steadily advancing. The Association is happily situated in a building formerly occupied as a residence school for girls, a substantial dignified structure of the usual Mexican style, with a large patio around which are the rooms, above and below. Palms and flowers add charm. The hostel rooms and the two rooms of the secretary are on the upper floor; below are a number of other rooms, including a dining room and kitchen. The grounds are attractive, and a

swimming pool now under construction will be a great addition.

There is a charming intimacy about the life in Guadalajara, and the Association is being built to a great extent on personal contacts. A programme of classes and recreation, with a good deal of emphasis on informal social and spiritual gatherings—a concert, a lecture, or similar event—meets a definite need and fosters a spirit of fellowship.

There is a great contrast between the simple Association of very personal quality at Guadalajara and the modern institutional Y.W.C.A. of Mexico City. Both are needed in Mexico, and to relate these Associations and build a national movement is the next objective.

An effective way to bring them together would be a joint camp. About thirty miles from Guadalajara, at Chapala, on the way to Mexico City, is a beautiful location for a mountain camp. Such a camp could be used for summer training courses for leaders, staff and volunteers, which are badly needed, and also serve a wider purpose as an international camp for South and North America.

While in Mexico I often had the feeling of facing toward the United States yet being already in Latin America. There is a pervasive North American influence within the total atmosphere of another civilization. Mexico is therefore a cultural bridge between North America and Latin America which could be more effectively used for mutual understanding. Moreover, any extension of the Y.W.C.A. to Central America will probably be through the help of Mexico City, and some contacts have already been established.

The Mexican Association can be of help to the World Movement of the Y.W.C.A., especially in three ways: it

is a practical demonstration of freedom from racial prejudices; it can add to the appreciation of Indian culture, although as yet the Y.W.C.A. has relatively little contact with Indians; it is a channel for understanding between North America and Latin America.

BOLIVIA

THE Y.W.C.A. IN LA PAZ has a distinctive quality in keeping with its unusual situation in the highest capital city in the world. It is a new Association of about a hundred members, which had as its nucleus a small club of teachers connected with the *Instituto Norte Americano*, commonly known as the American Institute, a Methodist Mission co-educational school. This club has been held together as a fellowship group through the friendly help of several of the leaders in the American Institute, with no outside assistance until the visit in March, 1941, of the present Advisory Programme Secretary for South America. At that time the fellowship group became a regular Association. A grant from the Y.W.C.A. in the United States made possible renting an attractive recreation room for five afternoons a week, with an adjoining small room equipped as a kitchen, and used for cooking classes and preparation of afternoon teas.*

The interest of the expanding membership is being carried along in the programme development, and to an unusual degree all the members have a real sense of participation and of collective responsibility.

In the absence of an experienced secretary, several sub-committees are being carefully developed under the guidance of the Advisory Programme Secretary, to carry

* The Y.W.C.A. has now secured and moved into its own home at Reyes Ortiz 41.

specific parts of the programme. At the time of my visit there were language classes, a class in cooking, an occasional general social event such as a concert or a *conferencia*, always of interest in South America, and many small informal social gatherings, which play an important part in interpreting the meaning of the Association to individuals.

A special service project is evening literary classes for the group of Indian servants in the American compound, who are being taught to read and write their own language, Aymara. In addition to the group which is studying Aymara, the school carpenter and one or two others have been learning English. The Y.W.C.A. may be able to extend this service to a larger number of Indians and perhaps develop something more of a programme. The major national problem in Bolivia is the illiteracy and generally low level of the Indians, who constitute a very large majority of the population.

The Girl Reserve group in La Paz deserves special mention, as the La Paz Institute and the Lima High School in Peru are the only mission institutions having Girl Reserve work. The club in La Paz is a fine group of young Bolivian girls, a strong potential nucleus of future leadership.

The general religious atmosphere in Bolivia is fairly liberal. Members of the Y.W.C.A. belong to both Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches, the latter in the majority. Its work is attracting favourable attention among a small but growing number of people in the community, and publicity can be secured without difficulty. It has an interesting, rather simple programme. But it is only a beginning; and the leaders are conscious that the Association must reach out to meet the needs of more women and girls—young women in business, underprivileged low-paid workers, and others who have

a special need for recreation in a moral, wholesome atmosphere. Although there is economic freedom, social freedom still lags behind, and for many young women in La Paz, life is devoid of normal social contact. The Y.W.C.A. has a full and interesting opportunity before it.

CHILE

CHILE IS THE ONLY COUNTRY in South America that has a national movement, and although the national movement is little more than nominal at present, there is the basis for development. There are also real desire and capacity for this development, but trained leadership is needed to help the Committee at this stage. On the National Committee are eight members, four Protestant and four Roman Catholic, with equal representation from the two centres, and including the Presidents of the two Associations and the World's Council member for Chile.

Chile is a vertical not a horizontal country. The two existing Associations, in Santiago and Valparaiso, are in the centre of the country. Concepción, farther south, which formerly had an Association, offers a remarkable field for student work because of its new University. Antofagasta, in the north, is another possibility.

The Association in Santiago occupies a rambling apartment on the second floor of a building on the Alameda, the main boulevard, only a few blocks from the centre of the business district. It has its own stairway, leading up from the side-street entrance, and in spite of obvious need for repairs, fresh paper and paint, a delightful atmosphere has been created through the use of posters, kodak pictures of camp, and a bulletin board which shows a programme of varied activities.

There are a fairly good-sized drawing room, several smaller rooms, two offices, a large room which serves for a gymnasium and for general gatherings, a good-sized dining room for teas and lunches, and a kitchen.

The main period of activity is the late afternoon and evening, from 4:30 to 8:30 or 9:00, the dinner hour, which is very late in Chile. The educational programme includes a wide variety of classes: English, business methods, physical education and dancing, millinery and dressmaking, music, dramatics and art, and—somewhat unusual as a Y.W.C.A. subject—horseback riding. This wide range is explained by the fact that the classes are taught by outside teachers on a commission basis; the Y.W.C.A. secures a teacher for any group wanting a special class. Some of this work has been greatly affected by the North American-Chilean Institute and the British-Chilean Institute, both of which have large classes in English and business courses. In connection with the Women's Organization for Civilian Defense, the Y.W.C.A. has organized classes in first aid, radio telegraphy and motor train driving. This last subject seems rather remote from immediate need, but it has demonstrated the cooperative spirit of the Y.W.C.A. and the interest that is being aroused in preparations for the possible emergency of war.

The main emphasis of the Association in Santiago is on clubs and general activities and not on the educational programme. There are four main clubs: a very active camping group of forty or more business and professional women; the young girls' club, *Club Juvenil*, averaging around thirty-five girls between sixteen and twenty-two years of age; the Junior Club, the youngest group of about twenty little girls from eight to twelve years of age; and a Y.M. and Y.W.C.A. Ping Pong Club of about forty young men and girls, a very active group. Each

of these clubs has a programme suited to its membership, combining educational classes and recreation and carrying on some definite piece of social service. Excursions are planned for the membership as a whole, and offer an opportunity for wholesome contacts between young men and women. Although the club secretary assumes much responsibility for club activities, the members have a full share in planning the programme through their special committees.

The atmosphere of the dances which are held once a month is maintained on a high level. Admission is by ticket, and one or both secretaries always attend. Although there is in Chile a greater measure of social freedom than in most places in South America, probably many of the girls in the Y.W.C.A. have little opportunity for social contact outside their own family and social setting, hence these events fill a definite need in their lives.

The general programme is quite varied, including an annual Fancy Dress Ball, a Christmas supper, observance of Mother's Day and other occasions. Lectures are planned on a variety of subjects. A Social Service Committee arranges each year for the distribution of clothing for poor children; four hundred or more last year received these gifts. A very special event of the past year was the entertainment of the American Youth Hostel group. The gymnasium was turned over for their use as a dormitory—they had their own sleeping bags—and the Y.W.C.A. clubs gave a dance for them. The Chilean young people taught the visitors the Chilean national dance, and in exchange learned some of their dances. It seems to have been a very successful international experience.

In all the programme one has the impression of a rather limited group, like a family, enjoying the privi-

leges and the friendship of the Association. The membership is largely made up of young business women, mostly from offices. An occasional student attends a dance, but it is fair to say that the Association has little present contact with students, also no contact with industrial girls, and not enough with the upper economic level of either the professional or leisure class. The total impact of the Santiago Y.W.C.A. is therefore limited to the influence on the employed young women, for whom the Y.W.C.A. has meaning as their social club.

The general religious atmosphere in Santiago, as in Chile in general, is liberal. The membership and Board of the Y.W.C.A. are largely Roman Catholic; of the staff, the present General Secretary is Protestant; the activities secretary a Roman Catholic. Relations with the Y.M.C.A. are cordial, and the two movements have meetings together during the World's Week of Prayer and on certain other occasions.

The lack of contact with students—girls in the Christian secondary schools as well as students in the University—is unfortunate. The Y.W.C.A. in Santiago began with student work in 1920, and its discontinuance has been a serious loss, particularly the former relationship with an organized group in Santiago College, which has an enviable reputation as an institution of high standing. Moreover, women students at the University have an especially difficult problem, for, as in other university centres in Latin America, the University makes no provision for dormitories and assumes no responsibility for the physical or moral conditions under which either men or women students live. The need for a centre of Christian influence is obvious, in view of the insistent pressure of modern life on university students. There is a shifting of standards from the old traditional patterns of thought to new uncharted ways, and the

Y.W.C.A. has here a singular opportunity.

Although a more central position might be more advantageous, the Y.W.C.A. in Valparaiso is well located in a large upstairs apartment with an enclosed balcony fronting on the sea. More space would be an asset, especially during the peak period in the late afternoon, when the centre is overtaxed by the classes and clubs and individual members who drop in and out. There is a pleasant rhythm of life, always something of interest but without any sense of confusion and overactivity. A lonely person would be cheered by the atmosphere of welcome and friendly personal interest. Members of the Board or Committees, and outside friends, often gather at the tea hour, as the tea room is a special feature and serves a very useful purpose in promoting friendliness.

As in Santiago, the Y.W.C.A. is the centre for a good many varied gatherings: concerts, lectures and social events of different groups in the membership; parties for children and youth and mothers; celebrations of certain special occasions, such as Hallowe'en and Valentine's Day, and an Annual Fair, which together give a composite picture of the general social life of the Valparaiso Y.W.C.A., as well as of Valparaiso itself.

There is also a well-developed educational programme: business courses in English and Spanish; languages; dressmaking and domestic science; first aid; painting; gymnastics. The business course, which is in charge of one of the regular secretaries, is closely related to the employment bureau.

The real heart of the Association is the Council of Members, elected democratically to represent the members in helping to shape programme and policy. During my visit, members of the Council presented me with a carefully worked out memorandum on the need for a

school for Y.W.C.A. secretaries, in which they made several suggestions: (1) the establishment of a Y.W.C.A. Continental Training School to be financed by the different Associations proportionately; (2) scholarships for the Y.W.C.A. in the Technical Institute of the Y.M.C.A. in Montevideo; (3) a special summer course in the University of Chile, and later correspondence courses.

This subject of professional training for Y.W.C.A. work has evidently caused much concern. The lack of facilities for training and the need for financial provision during training, they say, prevent young women like themselves from entering the Y.W.C.A. as a profession. To have such a fine group giving so much thought to this Association problem is a great asset.

Special attention has been devoted to a Leaders' Course, an effort to train a responsible volunteer service corps able to carry definite parts of the Association programme. The standards of selection are high and those who prove out of harmony with the fundamental idea are dropped from the group. The course covers a period of two years, during which time the members assume responsibility for special phases of the programme—classes in physical education, for example. The members are supposed to regard their training as preparation for Y.W.C.A. service and not for personal economic ends. There are a good many problems in this plan, a major difficulty being the lack of people to help in the training, so that the General Secretary must assume the main responsibility, but it is a splendid attempt to produce better trained volunteer leadership.

An interesting club in the Valparaiso Y.W.C.A. is the *Ayun Maipu*, a group of young business and professional women, most of them probably in their early twenties, but with some older professional women. The club has a varied programme of education, social activi-

ties and social services. It takes special interest in a club for younger underprivileged girls from the poorer districts of the city, which meets at the Y.W.C.A. one afternoon a week. Another regular feature of the club is the frequent social gatherings with a similar club in the Y.M.C.A. The members of the two clubs seem to be personal friends, so that these joint parties are rather different from many mixed activities promoted by the two organizations for the purpose of bringing young people together.

The relationship between the Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. in Valparaiso is marked by a friendly spirit of cooperation on a normal basis for such cooperation, the two movements being fairly evenly balanced. Cooperation includes not only social events but joint religious services during the World's Week of Prayer, joint programmes of various kinds, and mutual help on individual projects.

The religious atmosphere is very similar to that in Santiago; there is possibly a shade more freedom in Valparaiso, which may be the logical result of its large population of foreign background. The number of foreign members of the Y.W.C.A., or Chileans of foreign origin, has decreased, however, in recent years. At least eighty per cent of the membership is now Chilean, and the majority are Roman Catholics, who form also a majority on the Membership Council. The Board has at present twelve Evangelical and four Roman Catholic members, nine of the former being of foreign background. The three staff members are Roman Catholics. The question of proportion in respect to church affiliation does not loom very large in the thinking of either the staff or the Board.

One of the immediate plans for expansion is a permanent camp site, for the summer camp plays an important part in the life of the Association. A large estate about

fifteen kilometers from Valparaiso has been left to the municipality to be given on long lease to organizations which are contributing to social welfare, and the Y.W.C.A. has hopes of securing here a beautiful location in the pines, high above the sea but within walking distance for bathing. A bus line passes on the road not far away. It would be a splendid location for a camp, easily accessible from Valparaiso and usable for week-ends during the entire year because of the mild climate. It would also serve Santiago. If successful in its request, the Y.W.C.A. would have to raise funds for at least a central building, tents, and general camp equipment.

Throughout my visit in Valparaiso I was impressed with the vitality of the Y.W.C.A. and the eager spirit of reaching out to the future. The staff realizes the inadequacies of the present programme: there is practically no contact with industrial women and girls, also none with the leisured class, who need the Y.W.C.A. almost as much as do the less privileged groups; there is very little relationship with adolescent girls or students. The Y.W.C.A. is not so well known as it should be. It could be more closely related to other organizations and to the general community life, as it has good contacts.

The wholesome sense of incompleteness which the staff feels does not mean frustration, but the realization of the need constantly to re-think the programme, so that the Y.W.C.A. may have more meaning. They know its value for business women and the contribution to the Association made by the young volunteer leadership. For many the Y.W.C.A. is a real spiritual shelter. Those who come in and out find in the classroom, in the library, in the tea room or the attractive salon, something they need. "Valparaiso may not know exactly what the Y.W.C.A. is," one of the staff said, "but if there were no Y.W.C.A., the city would feel the loss."

URUGUAY

THE CHARACTER OF THE Y.W.C.A. in Montevideo is singularly conditioned by the location. Some years ago, because of financial necessity, the Association moved from a downtown centre to a former residence adjoining a beautiful park near the outskirts of the city. This transfer of location has meant a change from a busy city Association with varied activities for all types of members—business girls, professional women, students and others—to a quiet, homelike club centre for a comparatively small number of young women of the leisured class. The distance from the heart of the city and its inaccessibility, three blocks from the nearest bus line, practically preclude the use of the Y.W.C.A. by any other type of member.

An old-style two-story house has been adapted to the varied needs of a club—the downstairs is used for two offices, a library, a room with a piano for music groups, a large dining room, with a fireplace, which serves for tea and social gatherings, and a small kitchen for an occasional cooking class. The upper floor has been made over for the physical education department. A fair-sized room serves for the gymnasium; the remaining space is fitted up for dressing rooms and showers.

The main asset of the present situation, and evidently the primary attraction which determined the choice of this location, is the unusually large grounds which serve for recreation and sports. This makes possible continuing the emphasis on this phase of the programme which under foreign leadership has been unusually well developed in Montevideo. The indoor classes cover the usual type of gymnastic exercises and dancing, especially tap dancing, which seems to be especially popular. Since the classes are small, individualized attention is possible.

An effort is made to use the outdoor recreation facilities to the maximum, not merely for regular classes but for the various informal groups. The Y.W.C.A. shares its splendid playing fields with the Y.M.C.A. for some of the boys' clubs, a much appreciated piece of cooperation.

Charm and friendliness characterize the Montevideo Y.W.C.A. Life in the Association has much of the quality of a home with a sense of leisure, very different from the tempo of larger, more active centres.

Here again there is a small group in a volunteer leaders' course which covers a period of two years; the first year follows general lines of Association work, the second year is more specialized. The course includes lectures on social problems and the relation of the individual to society; a series of talks on the Y.W.C.A.; and training classes in recreation and games. The lectures are given by various people in the community; the talks on the Y.W.C.A. by the General Secretary, and the classes in recreation are in charge of the secretary for physical education.

As a regular requirement of the course, each leader devotes a certain amount of time to social service. For example, every Saturday morning some of the members of the course are in charge of a programme for a group of underprivileged school girls at the Y.W.C.A. This emphasis on social service is a characteristic feature of the Y.W.C.A. in Montevideo. An active Committee on Social Work under the chairmanship of a keen young teacher has stimulated the Association to carry on various special projects, and may be the beginning of an education programme on fundamental social issues.

A significant feature of the Montevideo Association, resulting from its location, is the group of fine young volunteers of the leisure class, which constitute an asset peculiar to Montevideo. They are already assuming a

good deal of responsibility in the Association and are eager and potentially fitted to do more.

At the request of the Board, a trained secretary from the United States, one who was formerly in Montevideo, has been appointed to Montevideo as Advisory Secretary under the Mutual Service plan. This will mean the solution of an urgent problem, and the very able Board of the Association will profit greatly from the opportunity to work with this mature leadership. The fact that the Board has carried on so steadfastly without outside aid since 1933 is proof of their belief in the Association and determination to maintain it.

A pressing problem is the need for a centre nearer the heart of the city, to serve the growing number of girls actively engaged in business and professional life. It is hoped that the Y.W.C.A. may be able not only to open such a centre, but also retain its present place, which would serve admirably for sports and recreation for a larger membership.

Judging from the enthusiastic comments of the staff and members and the many attractive kodak pictures, the summer camp is a very popular part of Association life. The Y.W.C.A. up to the present time has used the Y.M.C.A. camp or availed itself of the hospitality of a camp site on the private property of a Board member. Because of the unusual facilities in Uruguay for summer holidays, the possibility of establishing an international Y.W.C.A. camp in Uruguay should be considered, for it might serve also for summer training courses for other Associations on the East Coast and also for Bolivia.

As in other countries predominantly Roman Catholic, there is general disapproval of belonging to what is considered a Protestant organization, but a study of the Y.W.C.A. membership shows a little under ten per cent Protestant, a small number of Jews, mostly European

refugees, and the rest Roman Catholic or non-designated. The fifteen members of the Board are divided into three equal groups: five Evangelical, five Roman Catholic, five Christians without church affiliation.

The very friendly personal relations and spirit of co-operation of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. contrast with the marked disparity in the development of the two movements. The Y.M.C.A. in Montevideo is one of the best all-around Associations in South America, in leadership, equipment and programme. It has undoubtedly been steadily strengthened through close contact with the Technical Institute and the Continental Committee of the Y.M.C.A., both of which are in Montevideo, during the period when the Y.W.C.A. has been weakened in many ways through the loss of foreign staff and support. The Y.M.C.A. has not opened up a department for girls and women, as in some other cities in South America, but the proposed extension of the Y.M.C.A. into new centres in Uruguay has raised the question of a possible joint survey of the situation and joint centres of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A.

Montevideo offers unusual opportunity for a normal development of the Y.W.C.A. The advanced status of women in education, in social relations and in business and professional life, the general atmosphere of religious freedom, and the liberal international spirit are all elements that make Uruguay a favourable field for the continued growth of the Y.W.C.A.

ARGENTINA

TO SEE AN ASSOCIATION open a new chapter in its life gives an unusual opportunity for perspective, a look at the past and a forecast of the future. From this point of view my visit to Buenos Aires could not have been

more timely. It had been planned to take place after the transfer of the Y.W.C.A. to its new headquarters, but owing to unavoidable delays in the alterations, my arrival coincided with the final moving, the resettling and the week of inaugural activities as neatly as if the dates had been planned toward that end.

That this was a new chapter was evident in many ways. In June 1941, faced with a large and steadily increasing monthly expenditure for current expenses and rent, the Y.W.C.A. had cut the Gordian knot by moving from a very fine building in the very heart of the city (anyone who knows Buenos Aires will realize what the corner of Sarmiento and Florida means) to a large residence away from the centre but still in a good location. Into this new place on Calle Paraguay the hostel and as many activities as possible were compressed.

The move to Calle Paraguay, however, was considered only a temporary expedient. Within a few months the Committee found for sale a large building in a central location and offering a number of facilities needed for an Association. A financing plan was worked out which involved indebtedness but on favourable terms. The building was bought and much-needed alterations were begun.

My arrival was in time for the last two weeks at Calle Paraguay and the first two weeks in the new building on Calle Tucuman. I alternated between observing the full programme of activities at the Paraguay centre and the steady evolution of Tucuman from the noisy confusion and disorder of painters and plasterers into an attractive, livable building.

Inaugural Week offered an excellent opportunity to give a visual cross-section of the Y.W.C.A. at work: dressmaking, book binding, physical education, stenography and typing, and various other activities. The

special events each day showed the more informal programme—a beautiful concert; a symbolical representation of the Y.W.C.A. through tableaux; a luncheon by the business girls' groups; a children's party, enjoyed by the parents as well as the children; and a special tea for the membership. The climax of the *Semana Inauguración* was the *Gran Baile*, a dignified social event attended by several hundred members and their friends, the staff, and the Board women with their husbands. By all this well-planned week of activities, by the display of pictures and posters, by the environment of the quiet library, attractive tea room, the busy gymnasium and the dignified assembly, and above all else by the pervading atmosphere of friendliness, the Y.W.C.A. gave to many people a personal answer to their question: What is the Y.W.C.A. in Buenos Aires?

Even with the *Casa Propia*—Our Own Home—a phrase spoken with a great sense of pride in possession, it will still be necessary to maintain the Calle Paraguay house for the hostel and some classes and continue the rental of the present gymnasium, which is part of one floor in a business building. A possible solution to this problem of space is being considered—that is, purchase of vacant ground adjoining the new house and putting up a building with gymnasium below and hostel above.

The Y.W.C.A. has also in mind the establishment of a permanent camp, at a place half way between Buenos Aires and La Plata, accessible and offering the maximum opportunity for use.

The Board of the Y.W.C.A. reflects the general composite character of Buenos Aires, with a number of different nationalities and church affiliations.

A careful study and analysis of the Buenos Aires membership also shows the complexity of work in that city:

By nationality: Argentines 76.25%, English 5.04%, German, Italian, United States 2%. North and South America, Europe, Africa, Australia and Asia are all represented in the membership. The total number is over 30 nationalities.

By occupation: Home women 23%, employed (business shops) 18%, teachers, etc. 17%, professional 2%. The rest includes younger girls and students, each 9%, and others not classified.

By religion: Roman Catholics 58%, Evangelical 31%, Christians without church affiliation 3%, Jews 3%, and the rest, religion not specified.

By its contact with such a varied constituency the Y.W.C.A. in Buenos Aires has great potential influence on the forming of public opinion, a field for further development. There is a fine basis of contact with other organizations. Leaders in the Y.W.C.A., especially the President and General Secretary, are in touch with the forces for progressive social thought and action in the community.

That there is a State Church explains to a certain degree the fact that the religious situation is more difficult in Argentina than in either Chile or Uruguay. But there are liberal influences at work, as the increase of Roman Catholics among the leaders and members of the Y.W.C.A. and the freedom of its publicity show. The Association in Buenos Aires has unusual publicity of all kinds: pamphlets, press articles, posters and films. Shortly after my visit, an official photographer took pictures of Y.W.C.A. activities which were to be shown in 1500 cinemas in Argentina.

Buenos Aires is one of the great cities of the world in size and complexity and potential power, and as such it offers the Y.W.C.A. an unusual opportunity but also

unusual problems. The Association was distinctly of foreign origin; it has passed through the process of becoming naturalized with many foreign staff members—too many in fact—contributing to the process. This has meant periods of delayed development and uncertainty of direction; nevertheless the building of the Y.W.C.A. into the life of Buenos Aires has gone steadily on, and today has the prospect of increased significance for the future.

In Argentina, as in the other countries in South America where the Y.W.C.A. is established, a weakness in the programme as a whole is the lack of vital work with students. The Buenos Aires Association has some contact with students through those who live in the hostel, and this could be further developed. In addition, there is special opportunity for student work in La Plata.

The situation is briefly as follows: La Plata, about an hour and a half from Buenos Aires, is a city of 125,000, the capital of the Province of Buenos Aires and a centre of Provincial institutions. The University plays an important part in the life of the city. In an enrollment of about eight thousand, approximately ten per cent are women, who are studying in all the Faculties. Most of the women, however, are in the *Humanidades*, Faculty of Arts and Letters, preparing for the teaching profession; there are a few women students in the Faculties of Law and Medicine, and fewer are studying Natural Sciences.

In each of the Faculties there is a student centre of some sort, usually just a room set aside for informal use. There are no dormitories and the University assumes no responsibility for provision or supervision of student housing, though a large number of students come from outside La Plata. There is a Student Cooperative Restaurant down town, the entire upper floor of a fair-sized

building, where over five hundred students eat at noon and three hundred and fifty or more at night. This student restaurant is also the central organization for the provision of medical and dental care for students, the only expense borne by the students being the cost of actual medicine and dental materials. There is a large Student Club, *Club Universitario*, of two thousand members, with a club house and gymnasium for basketball and weekly dances. The University helps to support this club, which is under the general administration of an Executive Board elected by the students.

The impression left by a few hours at La Plata is that there is an unusual amount of general student life in which women students mingle freely. The University, which was established as a National University in 1900, is distinctly more like those of North America than the typical University in South America, except that in Concepción, Chile, which also is built on the general unified plan of an American University. As La Plata is an important centre of future leadership, it is an excellent field for the Y.W.C.A.

When Argentina was accepted as a corresponding member* of the World's Council at the Muskoka, Canada, meeting in 1938, it was with the hope that there would be an expansion beyond the one Y.W.C.A. in Buenos Aires, into a national movement. Two possibilities have been discussed: Rosario and Mendoza.

Rosario is a very large city, the second in importance in Argentina, with a population of 510,000 (1939 official estimate), a centre of commerce and industry and steadily growing. The development in Rosario would probably be similar to that in Buenos Aires, with empha-

* Buenos Aires had been in corresponding membership from 1907 to 1923.

sis on the needs of young women in business and industry.

Mendoza offers a very different opportunity. One of the smaller cities of Argentina, situated at the foot of the Cordilleras, it is of importance in the western part of the country and a cultural centre. Mendoza is much more liberal and more open to outside influences than is Córdoba, also in western Argentina, an old-world Spanish Colonial centre, with the second oldest University in South America. Mendoza would bring the Argentine movement nearer to Chile, as it is only about an hour by airplane from Santiago.

Association leaders in Buenos Aires realize the desirability of expansion in order that the Y.W.C.A. may be developed as a national movement, and are planning toward this end.

BRAZIL

IN A GREAT CITY of almost two million people, the second largest in South America and the capital of a country larger than the United States of America, the Y.W.C.A. of Rio de Janeiro is carrying on a varied programme.

The Association occupies a seven-room apartment on the second floor of a business building on a main street near the great central avenue. A large main room serves a great variety of purposes—for social gatherings, club meetings and for the regular classes in physical education. The apartment is light and airy, and has an atmosphere of life and activity. There is an interesting bulletin board with news items changed often. Visitors entering the hall, which serves as an extra room and is always full of comings and goings, are immediately assured of a welcome, and get the impression of a pleasant, friendly place, full of human interest and with an all-

pervading spirit of service. There are classes in typing and stenography, the room for that purpose being always full of girls practising outside of class hour; there are classes in sewing and hat making, English classes, physical education classes. As one observes the work carried on, one begins to marvel at the effective use made of limited space, for certainly the quarters are far too restricted for the present work and hinder further growth.

Partly because of this lack of space and partly from other reasons, there is relatively little club work. A younger girls' club is in the making. A club for mothers of the poorer economic level, carried on for some time as a piece of social service in connection with a welfare organization, is being reorganized, in the hope that it can be something more than a welfare project. A live and flourishing group is the young business women's club, of alert attractive young women all under twenty-five years of age, a most vital part of the membership.

The Association is constantly trying to extend the range of its services. A small choral group led by a young Hungarian artist uses one of the rooms for its regular meetings, not a very large group but most appreciative. The Y.W.C.A. has been used also as one of the recreation centres for the entertainment of United States sailors who may be in Rio de Janeiro, in cooperation with the North American War Service Committee. Another worthwhile project is an inexpensive luncheon served once a week for some of the young foreign women, mostly North Americans in the Embassies and in some of the offices near the Y.W.C.A., a group of perhaps twenty, who should have this contact with the Y.W.C.A. The Brazilian members of the staff have been particularly interested in this service and have assumed responsibility for it.

One often hears of the "days gone by" when the

Y.W.C.A. had a splendid cafeteria and adequate quarters used by many girls and women, yet this recollection of the more ample facilities of the past does not seem to reflect a note of criticism of changes made when outside help had to be withdrawn, nor of frustration, but rather to indicate a real sense of need to move forward, for which a larger and more adequate centre is fundamental.

Even more serious than the handicap of limited space is the problem of staff. It is not possible to build a Y.W.C.A. programme of real significance in a great city like Rio de Janeiro without an experienced staff. One would not expect to accomplish that feat in any country, even in one where the Y.W.C.A. is deeply rooted; it is much less possible where the Association idea is as yet little understood. The loss of secretaries just after they have finished their apprenticeship and become useful, and especially the loss of those who have had a period of training in the United States, has been very discouraging—but marriage seems inevitable for the singularly attractive girls of Brazil! This is a problem common to all the Associations in South America, not that in Rio de Janeiro alone.

A great asset in the present situation, therefore, is the splendid spirit of the staff, and its real joy in a common even if to some unfamiliar task. This results in a wholesome atmosphere full of creative activity and free from tension in spite of the crowded working conditions.

The relationship between the Committee and the staff is another asset. Committee members are often at the centre working with the staff, so that one has the feeling of a partnership. This sense of comradeship enables them to face together the serious problems of the Y.W.C.A. with complete freedom of participation on the part of individual members of each group.

The Board in its present composition is in many ways

similar to the Y.W.C.A. Boards in other Latin American Associations. Out of twenty members there are nine Roman Catholics, three Protestants, one Christian without church affiliation, and seven designated as Free Thinkers. The Catholics are all Brazilian; of the three Protestants there is one Brazilian, one American, and one Chinese. The seven Free Thinkers are also an international group—one Argentine, one Uruguayan, one Dutch, one French, and three naturalized Brazilians of Polish, Yugoslav and German background.

For an understanding of the varied life of the Y.W.C.A. in Rio de Janeiro, a glance at the membership is helpful. According to a recent analysis, the total number of members was 392. By occupation, business and professional women constituted a little under a third, 134. There were 120 home women; 103 classified as students; other occupations, 135. (The number of students includes the Y.W.C.A. educational classes. It does not mean university students, of whom there are probably very few.)

By nationalities, the very international character of Rio de Janeiro itself is shown. Although well over two-thirds of the membership is Brazilian, 292 (this includes a number of naturalized Brazilians of foreign origin), the remaining third is made up of 23 nationalities. Many of these number only two or three; Americans number 32 and Germans 19. These nationality statistics probably signify in a number of cases members who contribute support rather than participate in programme. The actual number of those who participate actively in the programme is 250.

The division by religion is Roman Catholics 205, Evangelical 68, Jews 27, other creeds 23, creed undesignated 69.

A detailed study of these membership figures is

needed in order to understand their meaning, but they show something of the general character of the Y.W.C.A. in Rio de Janeiro. This small membership of 392 does not, however, give an adequate idea of the larger constituency of the Y.W.C.A. nor the spread of its influence, which cannot be measured by statistics.

An effort is being made by the General Secretary to increase her personal contacts with students. The housing situation for students is similar to that in other cities, but Rio de Janeiro is unlike any other city in having a Student Centre, the *Casa de Estudantes*, under a private organization, with a distinguished Brazilian woman in charge, a friend of the Y.W.C.A. of long standing and one of its Board of Trustees. The Student Centre occupies the second and third floors of the former Y.W.C.A. building. The stairs from the street lead up to the large cafeteria; on the floor above are office, library and conference room.

This Centre meets the needs of a large number of students, men and women, but there are still many outside the range of its influence; and in thinking of the future, the Y.W.C.A. has the needs of the students as well as the value to the Y.W.C.A. of contact with them, well in mind.

A camp is an important part of the Association's programme. There is some prospect of securing a permanent camp site in the mountains, which would be a great asset.

In planning for expansion, an interesting experiment in decentralization is under consideration—the development of neighbourhood groups of different types, the secretary going to the groups instead of the reverse. For such a plan Rio de Janeiro is singularly fitted by geography, a city broken up into sections by intervening mountains. The development of such neighbourhood

group work would mark a radical departure from the usual institutional centre.

A visit to São Paulo had for its main purpose the study of possible expansion. São Paulo is a progressive, rapidly growing industrial city with a population of 1,400,000; a centre of railways and airlines. The tempo of life is much faster than in Rio de Janeiro. The altitude is higher, the climate invigorating, the atmosphere is one of work, not leisure. There are many women in industry; many girls in shops and offices; many students in secondary schools and the University. There is without question an opportunity for Y.W.C.A. service with any or all these groups, if a supporting committee can be formed.

A restaurant run by the Catholic Women's League, where lunches are served daily at a very low price to six hundred girls, mostly employees working in commercial houses or dressmaking establishments, is the only piece of work that in any way touches the field of the Y.W.C.A. Social service activities carried on by women in São Paulo include pre-natal clinics, old people's homes, homes for the blind, for unmarried mothers, for lepers, vocational schools, domestic employment schools, classes for illiterates in factories, playgrounds.

The situation in São Paulo in regard to women students is similar to the situation in Santiago, in Buenos Aires, and elsewhere. The University makes no provision for the housing of students, takes no responsibility for their living conditions or moral welfare. Women students come from the whole State of São Paulo, of which the city is the capital. For these young women the lack of protection in the University is a serious problem, for the pressure of social change bears more heavily on women than on men.

Besides the University of São Paulo, two institutions which have a large number of women students may be mentioned: McKenzie College, Junior College and co-educational, formerly under the Presbyterian Board, now under an independent board in the United States, with another board in Brazil, and the *Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política*, an extra-mural part of the University, preparing especially for government service, and the first of its kind in South America.

Brazil is a great country with a great future. It has tremendous unused resources which it is now developing at a rapid rate. Women are part of these resources and the Y.W.C.A. has an unequalled opportunity to take part in their development.

PERU

THE ONLY OTHER CITIES in Latin America where there is Y.W.C.A. work are Lima and Callao in Peru. A Girl Reserve Club has flourished at the Lima High School—*Colegio Norte Americano*—since 1920. One of the North American teachers acts as an adviser for the Girl Reserves, but the girls are a self-governing group, and assume a great deal of the responsibility for their programme. The club is one of the popular extra-curricular activities of the school, and has grown so steadily in recent years that there is need now for a division into a Junior Section.

A large proportion of the graduates of the Lima High School enter business positions; very few go on to the University. The result is that one finds former Girl Reserves in many of the main business firms in Lima, especially in the foreign firms, because of the excellent training they have had in English. These Girl Reserve

“alumnae” retain a close contact with one another and with the school, and are remarkably attractive, self-contained young Peruvian women.

Callao, the port city near Lima, is definitely a town of working-class population. Here there are two groups: a Girl Reserve Club in the Girls’ High School, also a North American institution, and a club of young girls in offices.

These groups of school girls and young business women are an important element for the future, as they represent primarily the middle class, and although in Peru at present the middle class is socially and politically of negligible importance, it is growing, and the post-war period may definitely increase its power.

The Road Ahead

THAT there is a Y.W.C.A. in Latin America is owing in large measure to the interest and support of the Association of the United States. North American secretaries have helped to establish the work, to guide its development, and to hold it steady even when outside support had to be drastically cut down. The tangible result today in these few strategic centres cannot be considered the full measure of their influence, which has entered unseen into the lives and thought of many individuals, and is the foundation for future advance.

Although we may hope that the Y.W.C.A. in the United States may continue in the future as in the past to assume a major rôle in the Latin American advance, the contribution of other countries is needed also. The European tradition and background of Latin America would seem to make it important that leaders from Continental Europe should now take some share in the development of the Y.W.C.A. in that area. Great Britain has a special basis for collaboration in areas where English life and thought have had a strong influence, as in Chile and the Argentine. Canada is needed alongside the United States to contribute to a larger idea of Pan Americanism. The presence of a Chinese leader on the Rio de Janeiro Board is one of the present assets of the Association. In fact the number of nationalities represented in the Latin American countries would make a more international staff highly desirable, particularly when given in the larger term of reference of a World Movement.

Despite the fact that the Y.W.C.A. in South America "is only a chain of Associations almost unrelated to one another," each Association in its own setting has moved

along the same general lines and presents the same major needs for the future as it seeks to develop the œcumenical purpose of the Y.W.C.A. This œcumenical character of the Y.W.C.A. is clearly evident in the composition of the movement. The total constituency of the Association in Latin America very truly reflects the dominant church background of the countries where it is established, as does its leadership. At the same time, included on its Boards and staff and in its membership are members of Protestant and Evangelical Churches.

It is clear that the Y.W.C.A. is recognized by its members as an inclusive Christian organization in which adherents of all Churches, as well as others without definite religious affiliation, feel at home and participate freely. This is unmistakable evidence of solid achievement.

To go further in interpreting the deeper Christian content of the Y.W.C.A. movement is singularly difficult in Latin America, so difficult that there is a real danger of following the line of least resistance and allowing the deeper message to go by default. The bringing together of people with varied religious affiliations in activities and for concrete lines of service may come to be an end in itself. Every club meeting, every form of association is helpful in building the bridge across the division made by religion in Latin America. But the permanence of the bridge will depend on the depth of the foundation—whether it is, so to speak, a footbridge lightly built across and as easily swept away, or a bridge that can bear the heaviest traffic. It is not easy to build the deeper foundation. The difficulty of expressing thoughts, feelings and purposes common to all in ways that shall have common acceptance, tends to exert an inhibiting influence which may lead to spiritual atrophy.

One must not underestimate the effect of the genuine Christian atmosphere of the Association. The embodiment of the Christian purpose in the daily life of the Y.W.C.A. has special significance in a Roman Catholic setting, there is no substitute for this. But there is a great need to find the way to interpret more clearly the meaning of the faith which is the impulse of all that the Y.W.C.A. is and does.

To oversimplify this question of Christian emphasis in Latin America would show a lack of knowledge of the singular difficulties of religious expression in these countries. The connotation of words is different for those of different religious background. It is therefore harder to express the Christian purpose of the Association in Latin America in definite terms, where terms may be a barrier, than in a country of a non-Christian faith where Christian terms bring fresh concepts. Constant effort and thought are required to find the right mode of expression, the right ways by which the Association may become a source of spiritual inspiration to the individual and give positive direction toward Christian social responsibility and action.





